

LUTHER et al.
10/675,352
Page 5

REMARKS

By this Amendment, claims 2-3, 5-20 and 23-35 are canceled. Independent claims 1, 21 and 22 are amended to include the patentable limitations of canceled claims 2 and 3. Dependent claim 4 is amended to provide correct dependency from allowable claim 1. Accordingly, claims 1, 4, 21 and 22 are pending in the application and allowable.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §103

Pursuant to paragraph 1 of the Office Action, claims 1-2, 21 and 22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable (obvious) U.S. Patent 6,439,778 (Cairns). The Examiner asserts with regard to independent claims 1, 21 and 22, "Cairns teaches a fiber optic connector ... comprising: a multi-fiber ferrule ... movably disposed within the connector ... having an end face ... and an opposed rear face ..., the ferrule having a plurality of optical fiber bores extending therethrough ... for receiving the end portions of respective optical fibers adjacent the end face, the end face defining a plane that is generally perpendicular to each of the optical fiber bores ..., the ferrule further having at least one guide pin hole ... for receiving a guide pin ... to align the multi-fiber ferrule with a mating multi-fiber ferrule ..., the guide pin hole defining an axis that is parallel to each of the optical fiber bores ..., the fiber optic connector defining a longitudinal axis that is generally parallel to the axis defined by the guide pin hole or fiber bores ... and two pairs of force centering element or means ... for applying a resultant biasing force to the ferrule in the direction of the longitudinal axis or axial direction parallel to each of the optical fiber bores such that the ferrule is not subjected to a moment about a lateral axis defined by the end face of the ferrule and generally perpendicular to the longitudinal axis." The Examiner further asserts that while the reference does not explicitly state "moment about a lateral axis," it is well known at the time the invention was made that a moment is also known as a torque. Therefore, the Examiner concludes that "it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to have at least one force centering element or means for applying a resultant biasing force to the ferrule in the direction of the longitudinal axis or axial direction parallel to each of the optical fiber bores such that the

LUTHER et al.
10/675,352
Page 6

ferrule is not subjected to a moment about a lateral axis defined by the end face of the ferrule and generally perpendicular to the longitudinal axis. The motivation is to reduce the risk of misalignment between optical contacts and avoid torque or twisting forces which may result in improper alignment." Office Action at pages 2-3.

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection with regard to the independent claims 1, 21 and 22, as amended herein. Each of the independent claims has been amended to include the patentable limitations of allowable claim 3 and canceled claim 2. Applicants concede that the limitations of claims 2 and 3 are not recited *verbatim* in the amended claims. However, Applicants submit that any modifications to the precise wording of the limitations merely improve readability and DO NOT alter the scope of the amended claims. As a result, independent claims 1, 21 and 22 as amended herein are patentable. Claim 2 is canceled. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the rejection of claims 1-2, 21 and 22 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Pursuant to paragraph 2 of the Office Action, claims 3 and 4 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim. As discussed above, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the patentable limitations of allowable claim 3 and intervening claim 2. Allowable claim 4 has been amended to depend directly from patentable base claim 1. Independent claims 21 and 22 have likewise been amended to include the patentable limitations of allowable claim 3 and intervening claim 2. Claims 2-3, 5-20 and 23-35 have been canceled. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the pending claims 1, 4, 21 and 22 are allowable and the application is in condition for immediate allowance.

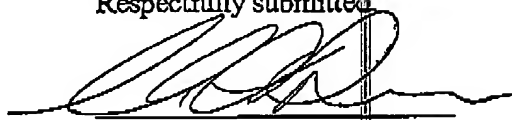
LUTHER et al.
10/675,352
Page 7

CONCLUSION

The pending claims 1-4, 21 and 22 are allowable for at least the reasons stated herein. This response is being timely filed and is fully responsive to the Office Action. The amendments to the claims do not introduce new subject matter that would require further examination and/or search. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the application is now in condition for immediate allowance, and the undersigned respectfully solicits such action on their behalf.

This Amendment AFTER FINAL does not result in more independent claims (3) or total claims (4) than paid for previously. Accordingly, no fee for excess claims is due. The Examiner is hereby authorized to charge any other fee due in connection with the filing of this response to Deposit Account No. 19-2167. If an extension of time not already accounted for is required with this response, Applicants hereby petition for such extension of time and the Examiner is likewise authorized to charge the petition fee to Deposit Account No. 19-2167. Any overpayment should be credited to the Deposit Account No. 19-2167.

Respectfully submitted



Christopher C. Dremann
Attorney for Applicants
Registration No. 36,504
P.O. Box 489
Hickory, NC 28603
Telephone: 828/901-5904
Facsimile: 828/901-5206

Dated: February 21, 2005